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FROM: NEW DELHI

OPERATIONAL IMMEDIATE

TO : DIRECTOR

IN 25879

FOR THE PRESIDENT FROM AMBASSADOR GALBRAITH

POLICY IN VIETNAM

FROM JOHN KENNETH GALBRAITH

DECLASSIFIED

E.O. 11652, Sec. 3(E) and 5(D) or (E)

By *Committee* Date 11/26/74

1. HERE IS MY FULL ANALYSIS OF OUR PROBLEM AND COURSE IN SOUTH VIETNAM. FROM MY STAY THERE, TALKS AT CINCPAC AND BANGKOK, PREVIOUS READING OF THE TRAFFIC AND EXPERIENCE OF THE REGION I FEEL REASONABLY SURE OF MY GROUND. YOU WILL BE AWARE OF THE INTENSE THEOLOGICAL DISPUTES WHICH RAGE OVER SUCH ISSUES AS THE POLITICAL POSITION OF DIEM, THE SCOPE OF EXTERNAL SUPPORT TO THE INSURRECTION AND OTHERS WHERE A SOLUTION OF THESE IS NOT RELEVANT TO A PRACTICAL COURSE OF ACTION I HAVE NOT ENTERED THE DEBATE. I HAVE ALSO ENDEAVORED TO WORK FROM THE CIRCUMSTANCES TO THE ACTION RATHER THAN THE MORE CUSTOMARY PROCEDURE WHICH IS TO MOVE FROM THE PREFERRED COURSE OF ACTION BACK TO THE CIRCUMSTANCES. WHERE MY BIAS INTRUDES, AS IN THE CASE OF TROOP COMMITMENT, I HAVE MADE IT CLEAR.

2. THE VIET CONG INSURRECTION IS STILL GROWING IN EFFECT. THE OUTBREAK ON THE NORTHERN HIGHLANDS IS MATCHED BY A POTENTIALLY EVEN MORE DAMAGING IMPACT ON THE ECONOMY AND ESPECIALLY ON THE MOVEMENT OF RICE TO SAIGON.

3. IN THE ABSENCE OF KNOWLEDGE OF THE ADMIXTURE OF TERROR AND ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL EVANGELISM WE HAD BEST ASSUME THAT IT IS EMPLOYING BOTH. WE MUST NOT FOREVER BE GUIDED BY THOSE WHO MISUNDERSTAND THE DYNAMICS OF REVOLUTION AND IMAGINE THAT BECAUSE THE COMMUNISTS DO NOT APPEAL TO US THEY ARE ABHORRENT TO EVERYONE.

4. IN OUR ENTHUSIASM TO PROVE OUTSIDE INTERVENTION BEFORE WORLD OPINION WE HAVE UNQUESTIONABLY EXAGGERATED THE ROLE OF MATERIAL ASSISTANCE ESPECIALLY

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IN THE MAIN AREA OF INSURRECTION IN THE FAR SOUTH. THAT LEADERS AND RADIO GUIDANCE COME IN WE KNOW. BUT THE AMOUNT OF AMMUNITION AND WEAPONRY THAT A MAN CAN CARRY ON HIS BACK FOR SEVERAL HUNDRED KILOMETERS OVER JUNGLE TRAILS WAS NOT INCREASED APPRECIABLY BY MARX. NO MAJOR CONFLICT CAN DEPEND ON SUCH LOGISTIC SUPPORT.

5. A MAXIMUM OF 18,000 LIGHTLY ARMED MEN ARE INVOLVED IN THE INSURRECTION. THESE ARE GVN ESTIMATES AND THE FACTOR OF EXAGGERATION IS UNQUESTIONABLY CONSIDERABLE. TEN THOUSAND IS MORE PROBABLE. WHAT WE HAVE IN OPPOSITION INVOLVES A HEAVY THEOLOGICAL DISPUTE. DIEM IT IS SAID IS A GREAT BUT DEFAMED LEADER. IT IS ALSO SAID HE HAS LOST TOUCH WITH THE MASSES, IS IN POLITICAL DISREPUTE AND OTHERWISE NO GOOD. THIS DEBATE CAN BE BYPASSED BY AGREED POINTS. IT IS AGREED THAT ADMINISTRATIVELY DIEM IS EXCEEDINGLY BAD. HE HOLDS FAR TOO MUCH POWER IN HIS OWN HANDS, EMPLOYS HIS ARMY BADLY, HAS NO INTELLIGENCE ORGANIZATION WORTHY OF THE NAME, HAS ARBITRARY OR INCOMPETENT SUBORDINATES IN THE PROVINCES AND SOME ACHIEVEMENTS NOTWITHSTANDING, HAS A POOR ECONOMIC POLICY. HE HAS ALSO EFFECTIVELY RESISTED IMPROVEMENT FOR A LONG WHILE IN FACE OF HEAVY DETERIORATION. THIS IS ENOUGH. WHETHER HIS POLITICAL POSTURE IS NEPOTIC, DESPOTIC OUT OF TOUCH WITH THE VILLAGERS AND HENCE DAMAGING OR WHETHER THIS DAMAGE IS THE FIGMENT OF SAIGON INTELLECTUALS DOES NOT BEAR ON OUR IMMEDIATE POLICY AND MAY BE BY-PASSED AT LEAST IN PART.

6. THE SVN ARMY NUMBERS 170,000 AND WITH PARAMILITARY UNITS OF THE CIVIL GUARD AND HOME DEFENSE FORCES A QUARTER OF A MILLION. WERE THIS WELL DEPLOYED

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ON BEHALF OF AN EFFECTIVE GOVERNMENT IT SHOULD BE OBVIOUS THAT THE VIET CONG WOULD HAVE NO CHANCE OF SUCCESS OR TAKEOVER. WASHINGTON IS CURRENTLY HAVING AN INTELLECTUAL ORGASM ON THE UNBEATABILITY OF GUERRILLA WAR. WERE GUERRILLAS EFFECTIVE IN A RATIO OF ONE TO FIFTEEN OR TWENTY-FIVE IT IS OBVIOUS THAT NO GOVERNMENT WOULD BE SAFE. THE VIET CONG, IT SHOULD BE NOTED, IS STRONGEST IN THE SOUTHERN DELTA WHICH IS NOT JUNGLE BUT OPEN RICE PADDY.

7. THE FUNDAMENTAL DIFFICULTIES IN COUNTERING THE INSURGENCY, APART FROM ABSENCE OF INTELLIGENCE, ARE TWO-FOLD. FIRST IS THE POOR COMMAND, DEPLOYMENT, TRAINING, MORALE AND OTHER WEAKNESSES OF THE ARMY AND PARAMILITARY FORCES. AND SECOND WHILE THEY CAN OPERATE - - SWEEP - - THROUGH ANY PART OF THE COUNTRY AND CLEAR OUT ANY VISIBLE INSURGENTS, THEY CANNOT GUARANTEE SECURITY AFTERWARDS. THE VIET CONG COMES BACK AND PUTS THE ARM ON ALL WHO HAVE COLLABORATED. THIS FACT IS VERY IMPORTANT IN RELATION TO REQUESTS FROM AMERICAN MANPOWER. OUR FORCES WOULD CONDUCT THE ROUND-UP OPERATIONS WHICH THE RVN ARMY CAN ALREADY DO. WE COULDN'T CONCEIVABLY SEND ENOUGH MEN TO PROVIDE SAFETY FOR THE VILLAGES AS A SUBSTITUTE FOR AN EFFECTIVELY TRAINED CIVIL GUARD AND HOME DEFENSE FORCE AND, PERHAPS, A POLITICALLY COOPERATIVE COMMUNITY.

8. THE KEY AND INESCAPABLE POINT, THEN, IS THE INEFFECTUALITY (ABETTED DEBATABLE BY THE UNPOPULARITY) OF THE DIEM GOVERNMENT. THIS IS THE STRATEGIC FACTOR. NOR CAN ANYONE ACCEPT THE STATEMENT OF THOSE WHO HAVE BEEN EITHER TOO LONG OR TOO LITTLE IN ASIA THAT HIS IS THE INEVITABLE POSTURE OF THE

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ASIAN MANDARIN. FOR ONE THING IT ISN'T TRUE, BUT WERE IT SO THE ONLY POSSIBLE CONCLUSION WOULD BE THAT THERE IS NO FUTURE FOR MANDARINS. THE COMMUNISTS DON'T FAVOR THEM.

9. I COME NOW TO A LESSER MISCALCULATION, THE ALLEGED WEAKENING EMPHASIS OF THE MEKONG FLOOD. FLOODS IN THIS PART OF THE WORLD ARE AN OLD TRAP FOR WESTERN NON-AGRICULTURISTS. THEY ARE JUDGED BY WHAT THE OHIO DOES TO ITS TOWNS. NOW AS THE FLOOD WATERS RECEDE IT IS ALREADY EVIDENT THAT THIS FLOOD CONFORMS TO THE ASIAN PATTERN, ONE REPEATED EVERY YEAR IN INDIA. THE MUD VILLAGES WILL SOON GROW AGAIN. SOME UPLAND RICE WAS DROWNED BECAUSE THE WATER ROSE TOO RAPIDLY. NEARER THE COAST THE PRESSURE ON THE BRACKISH WATER WILL PROBABLY BRING AN OFFSETTING IMPROVEMENT. NEXT YEAR'S CROP WILL BE MUCH BETTER FOR THE SILT.

10. I COME NOW TO POLICY, FIRST THE BOX WE ARE IN PARTLY AS THE RESULT OF RECENT MOVES AND SECOND HOW WE GET OUT WITHOUT A TAKEOVER. WE HAVE JUST PROPOSED TO HELP DIEM IN VARIOUS WAYS IN RETURN FOR A PROMISE OF ADMINISTRATIVE AND POLITICAL REFORMS. SINCE THE ADMINISTRATIVE (AND POSSIBLY POLITICAL) INEFFECTUALITY ARE THE STRATEGIC FACTORS FOR SUCCESS, THE ABILITY TO GET REFORMS IS DECISIVE. WITH THEM THE NEW AID AND GADGETRY WILL BE USEFUL. WITHOUT THEM THE HELICOPTERS, PLANES AND ADVISER'S WON'T MAKE APPRECIABLE DIFFERENCE.

11. IN MY COMPLETELY CONSIDERED VIEW, AS STATED YESTERDAY, DIEM WILL NOT REFORM EITHER ADMINISTRATIVELY OR POLITICALLY IN ANY EFFECTIVE

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WAY. THAT IS BECAUSE HE CANNOT. IT IS POLITICALLY NAIVE TO EXPECT IT. HE SENSES THAT HE CANNOT LET POWER GO BECAUSE HE WOULD BE THROWN OUT. HE MAY DISGUISE THIS EVEN FROM HIMSELF WITH THE STATEMENT THAT HE LACKS EFFECTIVE SUBORDINATES BUT THE CIRCUMSTANCE REMAINS UNCHANGED. HE PROBABLY SENSES THAT HIS GREATEST DANGER IS FROM THE ARMY. HENCE THE REFORM THAT WILL BRING EFFECTIVE USE OF HIS MANPOWER, THOUGH THE MOST URGENT MAY BE THE MOST IMPROBABLE.

12. THE POLITICAL REFORMS ARE EVEN MORE UNLIKELY BUT THE ISSUE IS ACADEMIC. ONCE THE IMAGE OF A POLITICIAN IS FIXED, WHETHER AMONG OPPOSITION INTELLECTUALS OR PEASANTS, IT IS NOT CHANGED. NOR DO POLITICIANS CHANGE THEMSELVES. DIEM'S IMAGE WOULD NOT BE CHANGED BY HIS TAKING IN OTHER NON-COMMUNISTS, INITIATING SOME SOCIAL REFORMS OR OTHERWISE MEETING THE REQUIREMENTS OF OUR DEMARCHE.

13. HOWEVER HAVING STARTED ON THIS HOPELESS GAME WE HAVE NO ALTERNATIVE, BUT TO PLAY IT OUT FOR A MINIMUM TIME. THOSE WHO THINK THERE IS HOPE OF REFORM WILL HAVE TO BE PERSUADED. SINCE THERE IS NO CHANCE OF SUCCESS WE MUST DO TWO THINGS TO PROTECT OUR SITUATION. ONE IS TO MAKE CLEAR, AS I SUGGESTED PREVIOUSLY, THAT OUR COMMITMENT IS TO RESULTS AND NOT TO PROMISES SINCE DIEM IS EXPERIENCED IN BOTH PROMISING WITHOUT PERFORMING OR IN PROVIDING THE SHADOW WITHOUT THE SUBSTANCE OF PERFORMANCE. AND WE CAN PRESS HARDEST IN THE AREA OF ARMY REFORM WHERE THE NEEDED CHANGES ARE MOST SPECIFIC AND MOST URGENT. THE LIKELIHOOD OF FUNDAMENTAL PROGRESS GIVEN DIEM'S SUSPICION OF THE ARMY IS, HOWEVER, NOT GREAT.

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14. AMBASSADOR NOLTING AND GENERAL MCGARR, BOTH HEAVILY IDENTIFIED WITH THIS PRESSURE FOR REFORM SHOULD REMAIN TO PRESS THEIR CASE. THOUGH ACTING LOYALLY, NOLTING IS NOT HAPPY ABOUT THE EFFECT OF PRESSURE ON DIEM. HE BELIEVES RATHER THAT WE SHOULD LEND HIM OUR PRESTIGE AND POWER WHILE WORKING MORE GRADUALLY FOR REFORM. THIS POLICY BY MY ANALYSIS WOULD MERELY CONFIRM DIEM IN HIS INADEQUACY A RISK WHICH NOLTING CONCEDES. IF OUR PRESTIGE WOULD HAVE PROVIDED THE SECURITY FOR REFORM WE WOULD HAVE HAD RESULTS LONG BEFORE NOW.

15. IT FOLLOWS FROM MY REASONING THAT THE ONLY SOLUTION MUST BE TO DROP DIEM. KOREA REPRESENTS THE ONLY MODEL THAT HOLDS OUT ANY PROMISE WHATEVER FOR US. WITHOUT DOUBT DIEM WAS A SIGNIFICANT FIGURE IN HIS DAY. BUT HE HAS RUN HIS COURSE. HE CANNOT BE REHABILITATED. INCIDENTALLY THIS VIEW IS HELD INDEPENDENTLY BY THE SENIOR POLITICAL COUNSELLOR OF OUR EMBASSY, THE MAN WHO HAS BEEN LONGEST IN VIETNAM.

16. IN MY VIEW, AND THIS IS NECESSARILY SPECULATIVE, DROPPING DIEM WILL NEITHER BE DIFFICULT NOR UNDULY DANGEROUS. THE VIET CONG ARE IN POSITION TO CAUSE TROUBLE WIDELY OVER THE COUNTRY. THAT IS FAR FROM MEANING THAT THEY ARE ABLE WITH THEIR SMALL NUMBER TO TAKE OVER AND CONTROL THE COUNTRY. THE ARMY IF INEFFECTIVE IS THOUGHT TO BE NON-COMMUNIST. THE RUMORS OF COUPS ARE ENDEMIC. NOLTING WHILE NOT IN FAVOR HAS SAID THAT A NOD FROM THE UNITED STATES WOULD BE INFLUENTIAL. AT THE EARLIEST MOMENT THAT IT BECOMES EVIDENT THAT DIEM WILL NOT AND CANNOT IMPLEMENT IN ANY REAL

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WAY THE REFORMS WASHINGTON HAS REQUESTED WE SHOULD MAKE IT QUIETLY CLEAR THAT WE ARE WITHDRAWING OUR SUPPORT FROM HIM AS AN INDIVIDUAL. HIS DAY WOULD THEN I BELIEVE BE OVER. WHILE NO ONE CAN PROMISE A SAFE TRANSACTION WE ARE NOW MARRIED TO FAILURE.

17. IT IS A CLICHE THAT THERE IS NO ALTERNATIVE TO DIEM'S REGIME. THIS IS POLITICALLY NAIVE. WHERE ONE MAN HAS DOMINATED THE SCENE FOR GOOD OR ILL THERE NEVER SEEMS TO BE. NO ONE CONSIDERED TRUMAN AN ALTERNATIVE TO ROOSEVELT. THERE IS NONE FOR NEHRU. THERE WAS NONE I IMAGINE FOR RHEE. THIS IS AN OPTICAL ILLUSION ARISING FROM THE FACT THAT THE EYE IS FIXED ON THE VISIBLE FIGURES. IT IS A BETTER RULE THAT NOTHING SUCCEEDS LIKE SUCCESSORS.

18. WE SHOULD NOT BE ALARMED BY THE ARMY AS AN ALTERNATIVE. IT WOULD BUY TIME AND GET A FRESH DYNAMIC. IT IS NOT IDEAL; CIVILIAN RULE IS ORDINARILY MORE DURABLE AND MORE SALEABLE TO THE WORLD. BUT A CHANGE AND A NEW START IS OF THE ESSENCE AND IN CONSIDERING OPINION WE MAY NOTE THAT DIEM'S FLAVOR IS NOT MARKEDLY GOOD IN ASIA.

19. A TIME OF CRISIS IN OUR POLICY ON SOUTH VIETNAM WILL COME WHEN IT BECOMES EVIDENT THAT THE REFORMS WE HAVE ASKED HAVE NOT COME OFF AND THAT OUR PRESENTLY PROFERRED AID IS NOT ACCOMPLISHING ANYTHING. TROOPS WILL BE URGED TO BACK UP DIEM. IT WILL BE SUFFICIENTLY CLEAR THAT I THINK THIS MUST BE RESISTED.

would not deal with the vital weakness.
OUR SOLDIERS / ~~(PORTION-GARDED-BEING-SERVICED)~~ THEY COULD PERPETUATE IT. THEY WOULD ENABLE DIEM TO CONTINUE TO CONCENTRATE ON PROTECTING HIS OWN POSITION.

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AT THE EXPENSE OF COUNTERING THE INSURGENCY. LAST SPRING, FOLLOWING THE VICE-PRESIDENT'S PROMISE OF MORE REFORMS FOR AGRICULTURE AND REFORMS WHICH WERE WELL ADVANCED WERE PROMPTLY DROPPED. THE PARALLEL ON ADMINISTRATIVE AND POLITICAL REFORM COULD BE CLOSE.

20. IT WILL BE SAID THAT WE NEED TROOPS FOR A SHOW OF STRENGTH AND DETERMINATION IN THE AREA. SINCE THE TROOPS WILL NOT DEAL WITH FUNDAMENTAL FAULTS - - SINCE THERE CAN'T BE ENOUGH OF THEM TO GIVE SECURITY TO THE COUNTRY-SIDE - - THEIR FAILURE TO PROVIDE SECURITY COULD CREATE A WORSE CRISIS OF CONFIDENCE. YOU WILL BE AWARE OF MY GENERAL RELUCTANCE TO MOVE IN TROOPS. ON THE OTHER HAND I WOULD NOTE THAT IT IS THOSE OF US WHO HAVE WORKED IN THE POLITICAL VINEYARD AND WHO HAVE COMMITTED OUR HEARTS MOST STRONGLY TO THE POLITICAL FORTUNES OF THE NEW FRONTIER WHO WORRY MOST ABOUT ITS BRIGHT PROMISE BEING SUNK UNDER THE RICE FIELDS. DULLES IN 1954 SAW THE DANGERS IN THIS AREA. DEAN ACHESON KNEW HE COULD NOT INVEST MEN IN CHIANG.

21. WE SHOULD PRESS FORWARD ON THE DIPLOMATIC FRONT TO GET ALL POSSIBLE INTERNATIONAL SUPPORT FOR OUR POSITION AND TO RAISE THE BARRIER TO MORE OVERT HANOI INTERVENTION AS HIGH AS POSSIBLE. THIS WAS ALWAYS A LONG SHOT. AS THE RESULT OF MY TRIP I THINK IT A LONGER ONE. THAT IS BECAUSE THE ACTUAL MATERIAL SUPPORT IS SMALLER THAN OUR PROPAGANDA HAS PERSUADED US TO BELIEVE AND I DON'T SUPPOSE WE CAN STOP THE MORAL SUPPORT AND LEADERSHIP WHICH THE INSURRECTION RECEIVES. HOWEVER WE SHOULD MAKE ALL EFFORT.

22. IN THIS CONNECTION, IN ADDITION TO THE OTHER MOVES AT GENEVA, ON THE ICC AND THROUGH THE INDIANS TO HANOI AS DISCUSSED WE SHOULD ASK OUR NATO ALLY THE CANADIANS AND OUR SEATO ALLY THE AUSTRALIANS TO MAKE CLEAR TO

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THE CHINESE THE IMPORTANCE WE ATTACH TO PLACE IN THIS AREA. THERE CAN NO
DESPERATE IMPORTANCE TO THE CHINESE. I VERIFIED THE POINT FURTHER IN LONG TALKS
IN HONG KONG. PROPERLY APPROACHED THE CANADIANS AND AUSTRALIANS WOULD SURELY
MAKE THE POINT FORCEFULLY.

23 AS I HAVE SAID THE PRESENT GAME MUST BE PLAYED MOST WITH THE PRESENT
DIPLOMATIC AND MILITARY LEADERSHIP. UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCES SHOULD THERE BE
ANY IMPAIRMENT OF THE CIVILIAN LEADERSHIP BY INTERPOSITION OF A NEW HIGH-RANKING
GENERAL. WHEN POLICY CHANGES ON DIEM IT WILL BE TIME TO CHANGE THE LEADERSHIP.
IN THE NEXT FEW WEEKS ECONOMIC FACTORS WILL BECOME INCREASINGLY CRITICAL AND
THERE IS NOW ^{NO} ONE IN THE COUNTRY WITH AN ADEQUATE GRASP OF THESE ISSUES OR
THE POWER TO DEAL FIRMLY WITH WASHINGTON. SOMEONE OF UNDOUBTED ABILITY IN THIS
FIELD - - EUGENE STALEY IF HE CAN BE DRAFTED OR JACK BELL IF GUATEMALA CAN WAIT - -
SHOULD BE SENT FORTHWITH. IN THE MILITARY FIELD WE WILL HAVE AN UP-TO-DATE
PROGRAM OF REFORMS FOR PUTTING IN THE DAY DIEM GOES. WE ARE NOT AS WELL
SITUATED ON THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL SIDE AND THE SITUATION HERE IS CHANGING RAPIDLY.

24. MY OVERALL FEELING IS THAT DESPITE THE ERROR IMPLICIT IN THIS LAST
MOVE AND THE SUPPOSITION THAT DIEM CAN BE REFORMED, THE SITUATION IS NOT
HOPELESS. IT IS ONLY HOPELESS IF WE MARRY OUR COURSE TO THAT OF A MAN WHO
MUST SPEND MORE TIME PROTECTING HIS OWN POSITION AND EXCLUDING THOSE WHO THREATEN
IT THAN IN FIGHTING THE INSURGENCY. DIEM'S CALCULATION INSTINCTIVE OR DELIBERATE
IS EVIDENT. HE HAS ALREADY BEEN DEPOSED ONCE AND NOT BY THE COMMUNISTS. HE
CAN SEE HIS CLEAR AND PRESENT DANGER AS WELL AS ANYONE.

END OF MESSAGE

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